

H.R. 4898, Rural Health Innovation Act

Sponsored by Reps. David Kustoff (R-TN), Phil Roe, M.D. (R-TN) and Annie Kuster (D- NH)
Encourages Innovative Care Delivery in Rural Areas

Background:

Rural America is facing care delivery challenges. There have been a large number of hospital closures in recent years, leaving many areas without access to emergency services. This makes it harder for patients to get needed care, and is a huge barrier to economic development. Local officials have indicated they want to provide emergency care in a sustainable way.

This bill incentivizes communities to leverage their existing resources to provide for the community's urgent care needs. It would incentivize health care centers of excellence to establish robust Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) or Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) staffed with physician interns and residents, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, and other advance-practice nurses. These facilities would have the equipment needed to triage and stabilize patients in an emergency, including a lab, X-ray machine, cardiac monitors, and more. These centers would serve the walk-in urgent care needs for a rural community and serve as a triage center and staging facility for necessary air or ambulance transports to area emergency departments.

This bill would also create a collaborative federal, state, and local pilot program to expand rural health departments to meet urgent care needs. They would be equipped with the equipment needed to triage and stabilize patients in an emergency, including a lab, X-ray machine, cardiac monitors, and more. These robust health departments would serve the walk-in urgent care needs for a rural community and serve as a triage center and staging facility for necessary air or ambulance transports to area emergency departments. Funds could be spent on creating partnerships with academic medical centers to help with staffing and on outreach to the community, informing them of the facility's enhanced services.

The Bill:

- Creates two 5-year grant programs, administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration's Community-Based Division.
- One grant program would help establish for expanding FQHCs and RHCs capable of meeting the community's urgent care and triage needs.
 - Grants will be limited to \$500,000 for existing facilities and \$750,000 for startup facilities.
- The other grant program would expand rural health departments to meet urgent care and triage needs.
 - Grants will be limited to \$500,000.
 - Communities must have an existing health department with a government-funded building, some nursing staff, and medical equipment
- Communities must be rural and be located at least thirty minutes from the nearest emergency department, using the speed limit on the most direct route from the proposed site to the nearest emergency department, or be inaccessible by road.
- Communities that have lost a hospital in the last seven years will have priority.

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